

Archived Information

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Dear State Director:

I'm excited to share the Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP) plans for monitoring in the 1997-98 school year. In an effort to assist all fifty eight States and entities implement the new requirements of IDEA 97 in an expeditious and systematic fashion, OSEP will refocus its 1997-98 monitoring effort. Specifically, OSEP will conduct on-site visits to each State to facilitate the formulation of State specific "IDEA 97" Implementation Agreements that:

- (1) address the revisions to IDEA;
- (2) incorporate all outstanding corrective action plan requirements; and
- (3) include significant parent, advocacy and LEA involvement in the development of the Agreement.

The major benefit of this approach is that it allows States to focus their resources on planning for the expeditious, substantive implementation of the requirements of IDEA 97. The Implementation Agreement, since it would be developed with significant involvement from parent and advocacy groups and LEA representatives, would set up a structure to assist States in taking a comprehensive approach to implementation of, and compliance with, IDEA 97, that focuses on State systems rather than fragmented procedural requirements. Any outstanding corrective actions from previous OSEP monitoring would be incorporated into the agreement.

The Implementation Agreement would be developed by an Implementation Team made up of SEA administrative members (including appropriate SEA staff during relevant portions of development of the agreement), and a parent representative from the State advisory panel, a representative from the Parent Training and Information Center, and a representative from the Protection and Advocacy agency. In addition, an LEA director, a teacher and a representative from institutions of higher education will also be included. Representatives from the Part H program, Independent Living Centers, and other public agencies and organizations will be included, at the SEA's discretion, in all or relevant discussions during the development of the agreement. Guidelines for selecting members of the Implementation Team will be provided by OSEP.

The Implementation Agreement will include: Identification of requirements for which the State is not in full compliance with IDEA 97; corrective actions and the specific action steps the State will take to come into compliance; time-lines for completion; required resources; designation of responsible staff; method of verification; and incorporation of all outstanding corrective action plan requirements.

The process to develop the Implementation Agreement would include:

- (1) completion of a SEA inventory that will assist the SEA in determining their compliance status with regard to the new IDEA 97 requirements, the results of which will be used to focus the Implementation Agreement development process on discrepancies between current State practice and requirements of IDEA 97;
- (2) development of the Implementation Agreement by a State team with OSEP staff participation;

- (3) public input into the Implementation Agreement;
- (4) formal approval by OSEP;
- (5) execution of the Implementation Agreement; and
- (6) verification of implementation.

All initial monitoring visits on IDEA 97 will be completed by January, 1998 and OSEP's planned 1997-98 follow-up monitoring schedule will be undertaken between January and May. In addition, OSEP will conduct focused Part H monitoring visits to selected States.

You will soon receive a follow-up phone call from your OSEP State contact to further discuss IDEA 97 monitoring for this year and to begin to work with you to schedule OSEP's visit to your State. In addition, Ruth Ryder, Director of the Division of Monitoring and State Improvement Planning, will be sending out more detailed information on this process soon.

We look forward to working with you and representatives from your State in partnership to implement the IDEA Amendments of 1997. Please feel free to contact me, Ruth Ryder at 202-205-5547 or your State contact if you have questions about IDEA 97 monitoring.

Sincerely,

Thomas Hehir
Director
Office of Special Education Programs